DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 358 551 EA 024 990

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TITLE Annual Report to the Association on the Status of Year-Round Education.
INSTITUTION National Association for Year-Round Education, San Diego, CA.
PUB DATE Feb 93
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association for Year-Round Education (24th, Las Vegas, NV, February 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Extended School Year; *Flexible Scheduling; *Nontraditional Education; *School Schedules; *Year Round Schools

ABSTRACT

The status of year-round education is described in this annual address to the National Association for Year-Round Education (NAYRE). Trends for 1992 include the following: (1) 2,049 schools in 26 states now use year-round education (YRE), 23 percent more than in 1991 and 135 percent more than in 1990; (2) the greatest growth has occurred in the western United States; (3) the numbers of multitrack YRE schools are increasing; and (4) private schools are showing interest. Among arguments for YRE are that it will provide: more continuous instruction leading to more continuous learning; less learning loss because of a shorter summer vacation; the opportunity to use intersession periods for instructional remediation; higher student and teacher attendance; fewer dropouts; reduced vandalism; and quicker diagnosis and remediation of student problems. A distinction is made between extending the school year and the NAYRE's concept of reorganizing the current 170 to 180 days of schooling. Suggestions for introducing an YRE plan to the public include stressing the educational values inherent in the YRE concepts and avoiding large community meetings in the initial stages. (LMI)

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ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ASSOCIATION ON THE STATUS OF YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

Dr. Charles Ballinger, Executive Director

National Association for Year-Round Education
Twenty-Fourth Conference of the Association
Riviera Hotel, Las Vegas
February 9, 1993

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Each year the Association provides me the opportunity to give a status report on year-round education. The Board of Directors believes that charting what has happened during each year gives attendees to this conference a sense of where the movement is today and where it is going tomorrow. The year 1992 was another good one for year-round education and I am able to present a positive report for the eleventh year in a row. In the twelve months since I last gave a status report to the Association there has been a continuing movement towards altering the school calendar, and it is timely to record what has happened since we last met.

The growth in numbers over the twelve months has been impressive. Last year, I reported to you that there were 1,350,000 students, encompassing 1668 schools in 23 states. This year I report to you that we have 1,575,000 students in 2049 schools in 26 states, one Canadian province, and Palau, a

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U.S. trust territory. That is an excellent growth rate of 16% in number of students and of 23% in number of schools! The growth rate over a two-year period is even more dramatic: 114% in number of students and 135% in number of schools added to the year-round roster. In 1990-91 the percentage of students in the United States in a year-round program nationally was approximately 1.7%; in 1991-92 it was 3.25% This year YRE students constitute about 4% of all the nation's pupils, and that percentage will continue to rise over the next ten years, I predict.

Next year at NAYRE's annual conference I anticipate announcing to you that an additional 200,000 students in 300 schools will have been added to the nation's total during the 1993-94 school year.

California continues to be far and away the largest state in numbers of school sites and students involved in year-round education. This school year California has 25% of its students on a YRE schedule, and that number encompasses about 70% of the nation's current enrollment in year-round education. Because other states have added significantly to their number of YRE schools, California's percentage of the national total has actually dropped by 5%. Both Utah and Nevada now have 14% of their state's students on a year-round schedule.

Several other states have seen significant YRE activity during the year. We note that Texas has recently experienced tremendous

growth in year-round education. Two years ago NAYRE's directory listed 8 public and private schools in Texas. This year the directory lists 172! Two years ago the directory listed two schools in North Carolina; this year 36 were listed. Florida has also witnessed growth in YRE activity, and NAYRE now lists 59 YRE schools in that state.

We continue to watch the development of the White Mountain Apache School in Cibeque, Arizona. We hope to see greater numbers of year-round schools in Native American communities in the near future. Last year I noted the opening of one year-round school in Yuma. Now there are eight schools in that city offering parents the year-round option. I repeat the question I asked of last year's audience: If the children of Yuma, one of the nation's summer hot spots, can go to school and learn in the summer, why can't yours? Yuma's children can and do, and so can your community's children!

Perhaps the most significant development this school year has been the shift in numbers of single-track schools. Three years ago about 75% of all YRE schools in the nation were multi-track. This year, for the first time in two decades, a majority ,51%, of the nation's YRE schools are single-track, while 49% are multi-track. As I have predicted for some time, we will continue to see an increase in the numbers of both multi- and single-track schools, as more and more educators affirm the value of more continuous learning and doubt the wisdom of the long summer

vacation away from formal instruction, which we should all call the long summer of forgetting. The growth of single-track schools will continue, since most American and Canadian schools are not overcrowded and do not need to use the multi-track system. However, I want to affirm the importance of multi-track as a solution to overcrowded facilities and as a way to save districts both space and money. In these times of limited financial resources, we need to acknowledge forthrightly, the importance of multi-track.

As was true in previous years, most schools offering year-round education continue to be west of the Mississippi River for the same three reasons I have listed previously:

1. Growth in student enrollment continues to be a result of a national population shift to the west and south;
2. The West seems less tradition-bound in many matters than the East;
3. Westerners respond to a winter vacation in a vastly different and more positive way than Easterners. For example, snow skiing is more readily utilized in the West as a common vacation idea and this winter has been particularly good for snow skiing in many resort areas, though Utah has been having more snow than it wanted.

While noting the Western tilt of YRE, we should nevertheless acknowledge that eastern and midwestern states like South

Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, Tennessee, Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan look very promising in the years ahead. And while the Atlantic states and New England continue to follow yesteryear's outdated school calendar, we have had in our offices an increasing number of telephone calls from Maine, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania asking about the YRE concept, and this interest usually signals activity down the line. We have to ask people in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey: How many of your children will be working the farms this summer?

We anticipate a growing number of YRE schools in Canada, where today we have in attendance with us representatives from Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia. The first Canadian YRE school opened in Williams Lake, British Columbia, a year ago and is now in its second year. We hope other Canadian schools soon follow that lead.

Of special note is that states along the northern tier -- Montana, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Alaska are inquiring more often about the year-round concept. The point here is that those areas thought to be most reluctant to give up the summer vacation are now looking at the possibilities of doing what was once thought unlikely.

We wish to recognize attendees from the Republic of Palau in the audience today, as we also recognized them one year ago, and we very much hope to visit Palau's first year-round schools soon.

There is another trend which we are watching closely. Private schools are looking increasingly at the YRE concept primarily for its educational values. There are now 29 private YRE schools in this nation that have already implemented YRE, and several more secular and church-related private schools are seeking information about the concept. We expect to see fuller implementation of YRE in this sector of the educational community in the years ahead, and we welcome this development.

Year-round education is an idea whose time has come. Increasingly, educators are questioning the traditional school calendar that interrupts formal education for three months at a time, fully one quarter of each year. The traditional school calendar is not an educational calendar now, has never been, and never will be. It must give way to something better!

The chief purpose of our schools is to help our children learn. I submit to you that a more continuous mode of instruction is more logical for helping children learn than a calendar allowing three months away from formal instruction, and I continue to expect that all educators will eventually support this view. Some may hesitate to make the change; some may actually fight a calendar change. But, what do these opponents have in return for their attempt to block calendar change? Not much: only a non-educational calendar, a poor way to educate children,

adherence to the status quo, and an inability to move towards the 21st Century. It certainly is no victory for the opponents of year-round education to have blocked a calendar change! Albuquerque take heart.

The strongest argument for year-round education has yet to be fully recognized or implemented. The vacation periods that we in year-round education call intersessions are still largely overlooked, and certainly underutilized, as the time to remediate identified instructional problems of students. As I have so often said before: We educators should not put marginal students through nine months of failure and frustration and then ask them to return to summer school for more of the same! It is too late after months of frustration! In contrast, the intersession is a logical time to pursue remediation, whether to correct a blockage or to enrich the background of children, and to do it in a timely fashion. When we finally utilize this time for its rich possibilities, then we will do what we educators have long talked of wanting to do. In some cases, the best remediation is an enrichment program attentive to the unmet needs of children.

Many of us are watching very closely the program first initiated in the South Bay Union School District, Imperial Beach, California. By combining categorical funds, summer school funds, and local budget support, the District provides full -day, interesting programs to students and parents who choose to enroll their children in intersession programs, so that students

have available to them up to 225 days of instruction annually. This bold and focused effort has paid enormous dividends to students, and I commend this program to you, as well as Oxnard's Elm Street School program, where intersession is conducted for the district YRE students every day of the year-round instructional year.

Even while many of our year-round schools have found a way to provide additional days of instruction through creative use of intersession, there has been increasing talk at the national level about "extending" the school year, as though it has never happened before. The rationale for extension is two-fold: first, more days in school will allow more time for learning new concepts, thus achieving higher-level graduates for our increasingly technological society; second, these graduates do not know as much as they should when compared with students from other countries. Consequently the United States is not faring well now, the argument goes, nor will it in the future, from international economic competition, because of this low-level of learning by our students.

The discussion about lengthening the school year is important, and most of us in the year-round movement welcome the possibility of a longer year. Most of the current year-round calendars, both single and multi-track, are flexible enough to allow a longer school year.

Please know that the National Association for Year-Round Education has long included the extended school year as one strand of YRE. We try to avoid placing ourselves in an either-or position when it comes to considering either the reorganized or extended year. We believe that reorganizing the current 170-180 days of schooling most states require is an educationally healthy step to take now. It is of major concern to us to hear an occasional supporter of the longer year argue against the reorganized year. To them we respond that they are 1) delaying the coming of the longer year, though that may not be their intent, and 2) they are consigning children for a long time to the inexcusable position of continuing the traditional school calendar.

Most of the calls to lengthen the school year originate at the national or federal level. As you know, the national government does not have to pay the bill of extending the year. The states do. Moving to a longer year will not be easy for the states to do in the short term, since most states are right now having a difficult time supporting current programs. Some YRE advocates believe there are higher priorities than lengthening the year, such as lowering the pupil/teacher ratio. What to do with state financial support is a bedrock discussion within the educational community. To learn more about the extended school year and how it can be implemented, please check with the 20 public and 11 private schools that offer a longer-year program. The names of the 31 schools are available from the

Association. At a cost of nearly $1 billion per day for public education in this nation, it may be some time before we will see the addition of very many instructional days. However, the extended year will come.

Increasingly, there is unease in the larger society about having young people in our suburbs and cities largely unoccupied, unsupervised, and unemployed for up to three months at a time. We have allowed to develop an explosive situation for our urban/suburban youth. It is time to reduce the all-too-long, troubling summer by reorganizing in some fashion the school year. It is also time to rephrase the question often posed to us by critics of year-round education. They ask: why do you want to destroy the summer vacation? We don't! We ask in response the more fundamental question: How long does a summer vacation need to be? Three weeks? Four weeks? Five? Certainly not 10-12 weeks! The last time I looked, most parents were financially unable to give their children much more than a week or two of vacation away from home. There is also a further question to be explored. Why can't camp experiences or family outings take place in seasons other than summer? Such experiences are important, and they can take place in a variety of ways and in a variety of seasons.

Many educators bristle when they hear taxpayers and elected officials say that we must live within the resources available to us. While it is true that we could do more for children if we had

more money, it is also true that we don't always use our existing resources to our own advantage. The National Governors Association said it very well in its 1986 report, Time for Results: "It makes no sense to keep closed half a year the school buildings in which America has invested a quarter of a trillion dollars while we are undereducated and overcrowded."

As the change to year-round education happens, it is important -- indeed, it is crucial -- to stress the educational values inherent in the YRE concept: more continuous instruction leading to more continuous learning; less learning loss because of a shortened summer away from school; higher student attendance; higher teacher attendance and fewer substitute days; fewer dropouts, reduced vandalism; and quicker diagnosis and remediation of student problems. That is a pretty good platform for any restructuring movement!

Speaking of restructuring, all of us connected with year-round education are very pleased with the broad new efforts by many schools coming into year-round education for the first time to focus on restructuring and reform as crucial elements in the school's (and community's) calendar change.

I emphasize these educational values because NAYRE's experience has been that school districts which stress first the educational values inherent in the YRE concept are the ones that have the easiest acceptance by the general public.

Unfortunately, all too often the decision-makers in the district -- that is, the superintendent and school board members worried about housing too many students in existing space -- suddenly spring upon the community the need to go multi-track year-round to handle the school district's housing problems. However, the worries of superintendents and boards are not the worries of parents. Parents want to know what this new concept will do to and for their children, and after being shown the educational values inherent in YRE, most parents begin to consider the merits of changing the family's lifestyle to take advantage of YRE and how it will help their children.

A caution the Association urges upon administrators is the avoidance of large community meetings in the beginning stages of introducing the YRE concept to the community. School administrators often make a costly mistake. Looking for efficiency of effort, they schedule a big community meeting to tell everybody that year-round education is being considered. Parents come to the meeting with worries, concerns and questions. In large settings, their individual concerns go unanswered. Unfortunately, an initial large community meeting provides the perfect opportunity for individuals to grandstand in opposition to change and change to year-round education is no exception.

The large community meeting should come <u>after</u> many small groups have heard from administrators, teachers, board

members, and others about the possibilities of YRE and the solutions to individual family problems that may arise. This way of informing the community is slower, and adds to the administrative workload, but it pays off handsomely in wide community acceptance of the new idea.

Because some forms of year-round education increase usage of existing buildings, district maintenance and operations people worry about "deep cleaning" the schools. There are models from other jurisdictions to look at. The local hospital, or a nearby hotel, are examples of institutions that deep clean while in constant use. If they can operate year-round, so can schools. We educators are not really the only ones put upon in the moving in and out of available space. Isn't that what happens week in and week out at conference hotels such as this one?

Tax money used to build new campuses (which in turn require more tax dollars for new desks, new corkboard, new file cabinets, new shelving, and new furniture in the lounge) is money not available for higher salaries, more music and art, and better instructional materials. Efficiency in the use of existing facilities enhances and certainly does not prevent a proper education. As we educators look inward and reflect on our enterprise, we will relearn what educators of yesteryear knew instinctively: that what students respond to most are knowledgeable, caring, and supportive adults, rather than fancy buildings and more pilot instructional programs.

A new challenge is arising in some communities that tests our patience, our charity, and our ideal of more continuous instruction for our youth. Opponents of the implementation of year-round education have chosen to fight our suggested change by disinformation, distortion, and outright falsehoods. In the face of these falsehoods, we must counter by continuing to point out the inherent educational values that are a part of year-round education. We must refocus our attention and efforts on the more important issues of how to help children learn through more continuous instruction and how to utilize the public's investment in education in a more useful and efficient way.

I hope you are challenging and thinking about what I have been saying in this report. That is the educational process, and that is in reality what brings us to this conference. But I do hope that when you challenge what I have said, that you do not retreat to the inertia of the old traditional calendar, but rather that you will come up with something better than what you hear and see at this conference.

Twenty-one years ago, when I was first assigned by the San Diego County Office of Education to the year-round portfolio, there were only a handful of calendars like extended year, flexible year, and 45-15 multiple-track. Now we have 60-20, 60-15, 90-30, 30-10, 25-5, Concept 6, the Orchard Plan, continuous all-year, and more. We have them because some of

you left our conferences saying you could do even better. We challenge you and encourage you to do just that. Try to do it a better way, but we encourage you to check with your elders who have survived a political bruise or two, here and there.

Now as always, I leave you with this rhetorical question: If year-round education were the traditional school calendar, and had been for over 100 years, and if someone were to suggest a "new" calendar whereby students would be exempt from formal instruction for up to three months at a time, would the American public allow, or even consider, such a scheme?

We hope you are having a good conference, and those of us in NAYRE leadership positions want you to know that we are available to help you whenever and wherever we can.